

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee**  
**Health Subcommittee**  
**Public Hearing re: H.B. No. 5037 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE**  
**BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023**  
**Deborah Lake**  
**The Governor's Prevention Partnership**  
**February 24, 2022**

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the appropriations committee. My name is Deborah Lake, Director of Program Planning and Implementation at The Governor's Prevention Partnership. Our organization is a statewide youth prevention organization focused on supporting parents, providers, and communities with the best strategies and resources so that young people across the state of Connecticut can thrive. I am here today to support prevention work through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

As a mother of a young child and aunt to two pre-teens, prevention is essential beyond my work. Supporting and encouraging our young people, educating them to make positive choices for their health and mental wellbeing, and feeling confident enough to do that as a parent – that is our work in prevention. Our young people face so many challenges, including seeing the normalization of alcohol use in the home. Seeing stories on their social media feeds about easy ways to connect with those who can provide illegal substances and feeling that the risk of using isn't that big of a deal will make a significant impact on our young people.

Our data shows that young people who learn about the risk of substance use from caring adults are 50% less likely to use substances. Our organization works with caring adults and influential young people to spread this message throughout the state. One of the highlights of this last year was when we collaborated with Charter Oak Boxing Academy to host a series of three workshops for the athletes and their parents to

talk about prevention. The workshops created a time and space for real, honest conversations about what was happening at school and in the community. The youth got to show off to their parents about what they know, and the parents could support healthy choices. Everyone involved learned something and felt good about making positive decisions for themselves and their family.

We have the opportunity to commit resources to support our young people in reducing and preventing substance use. Having peers as prevention messengers and empowering caring adults to have difficult conversations with the young people in their lives makes a difference. The prevention work done by our organization and the many other statewide and local organizations supported by DMHAS is a critical way to ensure the continued health and success of Connecticut's young people.

